

How Can I Get Involved?

You can get involved by coming to workgroup meetings; and/or by sharing your views by phoning, writing, or emailing us. The workgroup is seeking your advice and input on how to re-connect communities and people with the Willamette River. Your participation is *welcome* and *appreciated*.

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MID-WILLAMETTE RIVER CONNECTIONS

Workgroup Vision

To celebrate the
Willamette River as a
cherished natural treasure that
enriches our lives as individuals
and has the power to reconnect
the entire mid-Willamette
Valley as a united
community.





About the Willamette River

The Willamette River is a natural and sometimes overlooked treasure. Flowing out of pristine headwaters in the Cascades, the Willamette meanders 187 miles to join the Columbia River. The mid-Willamette River, from the Corvallis area to Newberg, is a place of beauty, diversity, and sustenance. This stretch of River provides many recreational, economic, and cultural opportunities and holds great potential for many more.

Mid-Willamette River Connections

This grass roots effort explores the potential for better connecting people of the mid-Willamette Valley to the River and connecting communities with each other. Combining efforts creates mutual benefit with better cooperation, greater exchange of ideas and information, and better understanding of the River. A workgroup of about 20 people has come together to gather information, develop a sound planning and public involvement process, and share community perspectives on River connections. Project partners are taking a very broad approach to defining connections—everything from water trails, foot trails, bike routes, and car tours have the potential to bring people closer to the Willamette River. There are representatives on the workgroup from the cities of Corvallis, Albany, Independence, Salem, and Keizer; the Counties of Yamhill, Marion, Benton, Polk, and Linn; from state agencies and councils of governments, and non-governmental organizations. We welcome your involvement.



The Mid-Willamette River Connections effort has been convened by the Willamette Restoration Initiative and Willamette American Heritage River Program with the advice and assistance of the National Park Service's Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why re-connect with the Willamette River?

Bringing people back to the River can energize citizens, revitalize communities, and encourage working together towards a common vision for the future of the mid-Willamette Valley. Re-establishing personal and community relationships with the River creates awareness and highlights the need to protect this valuable resource. Our population is predicted to double in the next fifty years, so we need to act now to keep our connections strong. The Willamette River also offers great potential to revitalize our economy and our sense of place.

2. What's the idea behind the Mid-Willamette River Connections effort?

The Mid-Willamette River Connections effort is an exploration of how current and future residents and visitors to the Mid-Willamette Valley can enjoy, experience, understand, and protect the Willamette River. This "exploration" will gauge public interest in better connections and increase understanding of community need.

3. I've heard that there's going to be a trail along the River. Where will it go?

There are no plans for a single, continuous trail along the River. However, there is a high level of interest in better connections with the River—and that's being considered broadly. "Connections" could include car tours, bike routes, walking trails, and water trails. Existing trails next to the River might be connected, depending on community preference and respect for private property rights. No specific routes or connections are being "pushed."

4. Inviting more people down to the River may sound good, but won't that mean more litter, vandalism, and crime?

While no public place is crime-free, first hand experiences and studies show that trail problems are minimal and occur at a lower rate than most other places. For example, a study of the

Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle found incidents of vandalism and burglary did not increase as a result of the trail. Rather, the rate of vandalism and break-ins to adjacent property was well below the neighborhood average. Surprising, but true.

5. Won't re-connecting with the Willamette River be expensive? How can we afford new efforts?

Re-connection options might be as inexpensive as placing new signs along the River or as costly as designing new trail systems. Many Willamette communities have already leveraged state, federal and private assistance for River efforts—at least 20 different funding sources are being

used to realize community visions. Getting these resources, however, requires a clear plan and united effort.

Connecting more people with the River can be an important local economic driver. For example, the San Antonio Riverwalk is the second most important tourist attraction in the state of Texas and anchors the city's \$1.2 billion annual tourist trade. The Mineral Wells to Weatherford Rail-Trail near Dallas, Texas attracts approximately 300,000 people annually and generates local revenues of \$2 million.

6. Who'd want to go down to the Willamette River—isn't it polluted and unsafe?

No. Although the Willamette River faces many challenges that warrant our careful and immediate attention, the Mid-Willamette is basically a healthy River. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has found that the River's biological health is fair upstream of Wilsonville and good in the Eugene area. On a typical summer day, people love boating, swimming, fishing, or enjoying a nature walk along the mid-Willamette stretch of River. The City of Corvallis taps the Willamette River for its drinking water as does Wilsonville near Portland. Many first-time visitors to the Mid-Willamette River are surprised by its beauty, solitude, and variety of fish and wildlife.

